The Cult of Apollo *Pythios and Delios in the Cycladic Archipelago and the Domain of the Sea*

Erica Angliker

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Widely worshipped in the Cycladic archipelago, the god Apollo was the patron of multiple sanctuaries and was venerated here under various epicleses such as Karneios, Patroos, Aiglets, Delios and Pythios. While the cult of Apollo Delios beyond the island of Delos is to be expected in the Cycladic world, that of Apollo Pythios comes as a surprise to some scholars and requires deeper examination. In this paper, I look at the dissemination of Apollo Delios and Pythios in the Cyclades by considering the various functions that these two divinities served as patrons of different aspects of maritime life in the archipelago. I show that while the cult of Apollo Delios was linked to the god’s power to ensure safe travel and disembarkation, that of Apollo Pythios was related to success in sea battles. I begin with a map of the Cyclades in which all the islands that hosted the cult of Apollo Pythios and Delios – as can be gleaned from literary sources, inscriptions and archaeological materials – are demarcated. The map indicates the location of each sanctuary within the spatial boundaries of its island’s polis, and identifies the mythological narratives associated with the god. Afterwards, I closely examine each sanctuary of Apollo Pythios and Delios in the Cyclades, paying special attention to those located on the islands of Paros, Naxos, Amorgos, Thera, Ios, Delos, Sikinos, and Kea, for which there is enough archaeological evidence to construct a general overview of Apollo’s roles under these two epicleses in different aspects of maritime life in the region. In the second part of the paper, I discuss the relationship between the cults’ ‘original’ sanctuaries and those to which they were later disseminated in order to ascertain whether the various sanctuaries of Apollo Pythios and Delios in the Cyclades possessed any features that might indicate that they were part of an interconnected maritime network.